

FirstNet contract award deadline slips

GCN By Mark Rockwell

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The contract for the FirstNet nationwide public broadcast safety network was not awarded on Nov. 1 as anticipated, First Responder Network Authority CEO Mike Poth said.

FirstNet issued its [RFP](#) for the sprawling, national emergency radio network in January, and it outlined an ambitious procurement plan to select a [lead vendor](#) by November and have final deployment plans in place next year.

"FirstNet will continue to execute the acquisition process outlined in the [request for proposals] beyond the Nov. 1 target date for the award," he said in an Oct. 28 [statement](#) on FirstNet's website. "We will continue to work diligently with our federal partners to complete the RFP process in line with the [Federal Acquisition Regulation] while being as transparent as allowable."

Although he could not discuss the specifics of the acquisition process, Poth said FirstNet officials were "moving closer to a contract award in accordance" with the FAR.

The lead vendor will spearhead the effort to build the nationwide network in the LTE band and offer interoperable connectivity to public safety officials. The network was mandated by Congress and is being funded with \$6.5 billion in seed capital. However, it is expected to cost much more to build, with some [estimates](#) running as high as \$47 billion.

The plan is for vendors to realize profits by leasing unused spectrum to mobile carriers and other potential users.

In his statement, Poth said the original plan was ambitious, and the organization, which is overseen by the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, had been working hard to stay on schedule.

"We developed and issued the request for proposals in January, answered several hundred questions about its content, and received and evaluated proposals from offerors," he said.

The schedule depends on many factors, some of which are out of the organization's control, he added.

"This is a highly complex acquisition that requires the input and support of multiple agencies and entities," Poth said. "It is critical that all parties are thorough and follow the necessary processes so that FirstNet gets this right for public safety."

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